

Message Text

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ACTION SCA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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LIMDIS

FOR: SCA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC, TH
SUBJ: JACK ANDERSON INTEREST IN ARREST CASES IN THAILAND

FOR: (A) STATE 122164 (B) STATE 124726

1. EMBASSY BANGKOK DOES NOT ACCEPT THE CHARACTERIZATION MADE
IN JACK ANDERSON'S COLUMN DESCRIBED IN THE REF A OF ALLEGED
DISINTEREST OF AMERICAN CONSULAR OFFICERS IN ARREST CASES.

2. THE BANGKOK CONSULAR DISTRICT HAS ANYWHERE FROM 25-30
AMERICANS IN PRISON AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT (THERE ARE CURRENTLY
27 IN THE BANGKOK DISTRICT, WITH 5 ON BAIL AND ONE
INCARCERATED IN THE UDORN DISTRICT). SENTENCES RANGE FROM 10
DAYS FOR POSSESSION OF 3 GRAMS OF MARIJUANA TO LIFE FOR
EXPORTING 46 KILOS OF HEROIN. OF THE 27 CHARGED WITH
NARCOTICS VIOLATIONS, 19 ARE TRAFFICKERS. THE AVERAGE SENTENCE
FOR AMERICAN PRISONERS IS FROM 6-10 YEARS. AS OF JUNE 1, THERE
ARE, OUT OF 27 PRISONERS, ONE SERVING A TERM FOR ASSAULT,
ONE FOR BREAKING AND ENTERING AND ONE HAVING PASSED BAD CHECKS

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PLUS ONE IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION.

3. THE BASIC PROFILE OF THE PRISONERS IN THAILAND IS NOT
THE COLLEGE VACATIONER WHO IS CAUGHT CARRYING IN GRASS FOR
PERSONAL USE. THE AVERAGE IS AGED LATE 20'S TO MID-THIRTIES,
IS MALE, CAUCASIAN AND A PREVIOUS OFFENDER.

4. WHILE DEDICATED TO THE INTERDICTION OF DRUGS FROM THAILAND TO THE UNITED STATES, THIS EMBASSY IS COGNIZANT OF ITS RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS ITS COMPATRIOTS IN PRISON. ALL PRISONERS ARE VISITED MONTHLY OR MORE FREQUENTLY. CLOSE AND CONTINUOUS LIAISON IS KEPT WITH THE LEADERSHIP OF THE RTG CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT INCLUDING INDIVIDUAL PRISON WARDENS IN ORDER TO OBTAIN TOLERABLE CONDITIONS AND ENVIRONMENT FOR THE PRISONERS. IN OCCASIONAL INSTANCES OF ABUSE OF AMERICAN PRISONERS RAPID AND VIGOROUS PROTESTS HAVE BEEN MADE AND CONDITIONS IMPROVED. MOST PHYSICAL ABUSE HAS STEMMED FROM CONTINUED USE OF DRUGS IN PRISON. (THE CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT ESTIMATES 48 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S PRISON POPULATION IS ADDICTED.) WE ESTIMATE THAT 20 PERCENT OF THE AMERICANS CONTINUE TO BE USERS OF HARD DRUGS DESPITE EMBASSY AND RTG EFFORTS TO STOP ILLICIT TRADE IN THE PRISONS.

5. THE MOVE, EFFECTED FROM THE PUTATIVE "STINK HOLE" DESCRIBED IN THE REF A, WAS IN FACT ACCOMPLISHED BY THE EMBASSY IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF THE 15 AMERICANS INCARCERATED. IT HAPPENED INCIDENTALLY TO BENEFIT THE ONE OR TWO U.K. PRISONERS THERE AT THE TIME.

6. TO COMBAT THE USE OF HEROIN IN THE PRISONS, THE EMBASSY HAS ENCOURAGED THE PRISON WARDENS TO SET UP WORK OPPORTUNITIES AND RECREATION FACILITIES TO OCCUPY THE TIME OF THE PRISONERS. THE CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT HAS ALSO BEEN ENCOURAGED TO RECOGNIZE GOOD BEHAVIOR AND TAKE OFF TIME FROM SENTENCES IN ORDER TO GAIN GREATER COOPERATION FROM THE PRISONERS.

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7. ALTHOUGH THERE IS ONLY ONE OFFICER ASSIGNED TO SCS/PPT SERVICES, THE SECTION CHIEF AND HIS DEPUTY DEVOTE SIGNIFICANT PORTIONS OF THEIR TIME TO VISITS AND HANDLING INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS SENDING AND RECEIVING MAIL, MONEY AND PROVIDING RAPID AND ADEQUATE MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE. QUITE FREQUENTLY THE EMBASSY DOCTOR HAS ACCOMPANIED CONSULAR OFFICERS ON THEIR VISITS TO KEEP AN EYE ON PRISONERS AND TO CONSULT WITH PRISON MEDICAL OFFICIALS. THE RTG HAS RESPONDED WELL TO ALL OF THESE EFFORTS AND AS A RESULT THERE ARE FEW COMPLAINTS THAT WE HEAR FROM PRISONERS OR THEIR FAMILIES.

8. ON EMBASSY ACTIONS TAKEN DURING ARREST SITUATIONS, AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, THERE IS NO BILATERAL CONSULAR AGREEMENT WITH THE U.S. NOR DOES THAILAND ADHERE TO THE VIENNA CONVENTION. THEREFORE, THE EMBASSY DOES NOT RECEIVE AUTOMATIC NOTIFICATION OF ARRESTS OF U.S. CITIZENS. MOST FREQUENTLY WE LEARN OF ARRESTS THROUGH THE PRISONER HIMSELF, DEA SOURCES, OR THROUGH THE NEWS-PAPERS. IN THIS REGARD, THE EMBASSY FOLLOWS A POLICY OF INTERVIEWING PRISONERS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND RENDERING

ALL POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF HONEST
AND ACTIVE LEGAL COUNSEL.

9. CONSUL JACOBS MADE THE COMMENT ATTRIBUTED TO HIM IN A CONTEXT
OF HAVING RECENTLY SERVED IN LUMUMBASHI, ZAIRE WHERE PRISON
CONDITIONS WERE APPALLING IN HIS VIEW. WHILE ADMITTEDLY OF LITTLE
SOLACE TO THE PRISONERS THE COMMENT WAS NOT MEANT TO SERVE AS A
POSITIVE RECOMMENDATION OF THE PRISON IN QUESTION--THE BANGKOK
PRISON LOCATED ON MAHACHAI ROAD IN DOWNTOWN BANGKOK. THE RTG
HAS RECOGNIZED A NEED TO UPGRADE PRISON CONDITIONS FOR THE
FACILITIES IN WHICH SOME 60,000 PRISONERS ARE SERVING TIME
COUNTRY-WIDE. THE MAHACHAI ROAD FACILITY WHICH NORMALLY HOUSES
ALL PRISONERS IN THE BANGKOK AREA AWAITING OR UNDERGOING TRIAL
IS OVERCROWDED FOR THE SAME REASONS AS THEY ARE ELSEWHERE IN
THE WORLD. THE MAHACHAI FACILITY HAS BEEN CONDEMNED AN AN
APPROPRIATE PLOT OF LAND IS CURRENTLY BEING NEGOTIATED IN THE
NORTHERN SUBURBS OF BANGKOK.
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